c:\bridge\Tr_Ace.docx 8/18/26 **+ #204**

"On Defense Against a Suit Contract, *When* Should You Play the Trump Suit Ace?: Another 'Bols Bridge Tip'"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen[1]

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Bruce: Today, we are honored to have with us Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will talk us through **"On Defense Against a Suit Contract, *When* Should You Play the Trump Suit Ace?: Another Bridge 'Bols Tip'"**. Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, thanks for taking the time to be with us today!

Esther: D**n it, Bruce! How many times do I have to tell you to **NEVER**, **ever** call me Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Always, **ALWAYS**, ***ALWAYS*** instead call me, Esther, because I am so "warm and caring"!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast…, err, I mean Esther.

Esther: Well, Bruce. Please try to exercise at least a modicum of empathy, assuming you have at least the limited capacity to do so. Can you imagine how relentlessly all the other girls in grades K through 4 of my elementary school years relentlessly, endlessly tormented me about my last name, Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

Bruce: Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! Well, Esther, at the outset, would you tell us from where your current report originated?

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[1] As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Journal, https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by **Bruce Thompson**.

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. The ideas and the bridge Board example in this "**Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson**" come from a bridge newspaper column, "When to Win the Ace of Trumps", written by Richard Pavlicek and published September 11, 1988.

Bruce: Errr, well… Err, I mean… Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, ummm… Well, before we delve into your fascinating topic would you please first tell us a bit about this Richard Pavlicek fellow?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course I am happy to address your question.

About **Richard Pavlicek**

Richard Pavlicek (1945-) has won **11** North American Bridge Championships, including a record-setting **3** straight wins in the Reisinger Board-a-Match Teams, 1982-84, and again in 1990. He won the 1973 inaugural Grand National Teams tournament and repeated a win there in 1997. He has written or co-authored several bridge books, including with co-author William S. Root their 1981 book, Modern Bridge Conventions. From 1984 until 1990 Pavlicek was the Bridge Columnist for the Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel. Esther particularly likes the Bridge Simulation Studies presented on his bridge website:
https://www.rpbridge.net/rpsi.htm
and his re-posts of his newspaper bridge columns:
https://www.rpbridge.net/rpco.htm

Bruce: Errr, well… Err, I mean… Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, OK. Well, from where did Pavlicek source the ideas in this newspaper bridge column?

Esther: Well, Bruce, as background let me say that from 1974 until 1994 a Dutch distillery, Bols Royal Distillers, the oldest distillery ery in the world, sponsored an international contest to annually identify the best "bridge tip". Harold Schogger on his bridge website has catalogued these "tips";
https://www.haroldschogger.com/bols1.htm
One year Giorgio Belladona, who won a World Team Championship in either the Bermuda Bowl or Olympiad a stunning **17** times, submitted the following winning "tip"!

"Whenever you, as a defender, include the Ace of trump among your assets, you should consider whether to hold up this card when trumps are first played."

Bruce: Errr, well, would you now present the bridge board example that Pavlicek used in his newspaper column to illustrate the "**Cardinal Bridge Principle**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course:

Dealer: **WEST**

Vul: **BOTH**

NORTH (**8**)
S: 8 4 2
H: Q 5
D: A 9 7 6 5 3
C: Q 9

WEST (**19**)
S: A 9 6
H: A J T 6
D: K T
C: A K 7 4

EAST (**2**)
S: 7 5
H: 9 8
D: J 4
C: J T 8 6 5 3 2

SOUTH (**11**)
S: K Q J T 3
H: K 7 4 3 2
D: Q 8 2
C: --

Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1**C**	PASS	2**C**	2**S**
3**NT**	PASS	PASS	4**H**
DBL	4**S**	PASS	PASS
PASS			

On Trick **#1** WEST leads the Club Ace thus "promising" the Club King and asking Partner EAST to "signal" whether he can "win" a **3rd** Round of Clubs either by (1) playing the Club Queen assuming the NORTH Dummy holds at least **3** Clubs or (2) by ruffing. Declarer SOUTH ruffs. On Trick **#2** Declarer SOUTH led his Trump Spade King.

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast…, err, I mean Esther. Well, as a Defender should WEST *now* "cash" his Trump Spade Ace "winner"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, absolutely, *definitely*, **positively NO**! You want to force the Declarer to continue leading Trumps and deplete Trump cards in the Dummy that is "shorter" in Trump cards thus reducing the Declarer's ability to ruff in the Dummy which would then provide N/S with "extra" Tricks. As a Defender holding the Trump Ace you should delay playing your Ace (1) for at least **1** Round or until you are *forced* to play the Trump Ace or (2) the Declarer plays his Trump King.

NORTH (**8**)
S: 8 4 2
H: Q 5
D: A 9 7 6 5 3
C: Q 9

WEST (**19**)
S: A 9 6
H: A J T 6
D: K T
C: A K 7 4

EAST (**2**)
S: 7 5
H: 9 8
D: J 4
C: J T 8 6 5 3 2

SOUTH (**11**)
S: K Q J T 3
H: K 7 4 3 2
D: Q 8 2
C: --

After WEST "ducked" on Trick **#2** on Trick **#3** Declarer SOUTH led his Trump Spade Queen and WEST "ducked" a **2nd** time. On Trick **#4** SOUTH led his Diamond Queen and WEST "ducked". On Trick **#5** Declarer SOUTH led his Diamond 2 to the NORTH Dummy's Diamond Ace. All the E/W Diamonds have now "dropped" all **4** of Dummy's Diamonds have been "promoted" into "winners". On Trick **#6** SOUTH can then lead a Dummy Trump Spade to "drop" WEST's Trump Spade Ace.

As Pavlicek noted, because WEST "ducked" at least **1** Round of Trumps, Declarer SOUTH can *no longer* "make" his 4**S** contract. This can be confirmed by executing a "Double Dummy Analysis" using the "**Bridge Solver**"[2] website which shows all possible "makeable" contracts for all **4** players:

	C	**D**	**H**	**S**	**NT**
N	**-**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**-**
S	**-**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**-**
E	**4**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**3**
W	**4**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**3**

[2] https://dds.bridgewebs.com/bridgesolver/upload_from_chrome.htm